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A questionnaire was administered in the spring to 830 rural Iowa high school males to determine the perceived influence of 4 selected groups on their educational and occupational plans. Previous research studies have shown that residence (farm-nonfarm) is an important factor in a youth's vocational-educational decision. Statistical comparisons were made on the mean responses of the 394 students who planned to attend college and the 436 who planned not to attend college the following fall using t-tests. Data were analyzed to compare the college and non-college groups on the perceived influence exerted by parents, friends, counselors, and other adults. The results indicate that the college bound perceived significantly more influence from all sources than did the non-college bound in their educational plans. The significance between the groups was not as pronounced in the occupational plans. Tables give t-test results and a breakdown of responses to the questionnaire. (DB)

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Perceived Influence of Selected Groups on Educational and Occupational Plans of Non-metropolitan Youth

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ABSTRACT

A sample of 830 Iowa high school senior males were interviewed in the spring prior to their graduation. Information was sought on the perceived influence of four selected groups on their educational and occupational plans. Although data were collected relative to the plans for these youth for the immediate future (their plans for the following fall) data presented here are analyzed in terms of whether they intended to attend a college or not. Actions (tests, applications etc.) must have been taken if the student planned to attend college in the fall. Students t-tests were run on the means derived from the 394 students who planned to attend college and the 436 who planned not to attend college the following fall.

We tried to ascertain the differences, if any, between the college and non-college group on the perceived influence of parents, friends, counselors and other adults. The results indicate that the college oriented youth perceived significantly more influence from all groups than did the non-college group in their educational plans. The significance between groups was not as pronounced in the occupational plans. Hence, data from a relatively large sample of outstate Iowa senior males indicates that youth perceived somewhat more influence on their educational than on their occupational plans. Further all youth tended to perceive less influence on their occupational than on their educational plans.

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Perceived Influence of Selected Groups on Educational and Occupational Plans of Non-metropolitan Youth

INTRODUCTION

A number of studies have been completed concerning the occupational and educational aspirations of rural youth.[1] Many of these studies have concentrated on decision making regarding those youth planning to attend college. Data presented in this paper are cast in a comparative framework between those who plan to attend college and those who do not. Many may not have the motivation or capacity to attend college, or they may lack the necessary financial support or resources to obtain a college education. In their immediate decision making process, these students have alternatives available such as serving their military obligation, going to work, or obtaining some kind of vocational technical education or training. All but the college bound have been lumped together in the non-college bound category in this paper although data analyzed elsewhere examine the data for differences between the different intentions of the non-college bound youth.[2]

The data represent responses from 830 male high school seniors from four Area Vocational School districts in Iowa. We attempted to see if these outstate Iowa youth were able to ascertain relative degrees of influence on their occupational and educational plans. Neal Gross and others have indicated that parents, peers, counselors, and other adult role models serve as sources of

influence for youth in their selection of occupations for the future.[3] In general, Gross has suggested that Eastern metropolitan youth often are lacking role models, particularly when geographical propinquity locks lower class youth into a relatively homogeneous area. The Midwest and particularly the rural Midwest also has been characterized as a homogeneous area.

Much of the literature attempts to assess the influence parents and others, peers, counselors, role models, etc., have on the educational and occupational plans of youth, particularly rural youth. Usually the assumption is made that farm parents are less qualified to counsel their children because they (parents) are not sufficiently aware of the urban alternatives. Some examples of these findings follow: it may be that small town and urban parents live and work in environments that place emphasis on preparing for occupations of one's choosing rather than guiding the selection for the child. Many of these parents left farm homes themselves and made the transition to nonfarm life and work. On the other hand, most farm parents have not gone through the farm to nonfarm transition and the resulting adjustment in their life and work patterns. These farm parents generally have not had the background of experience in nonfarm job selection and the necessary educational training.[4] Bauder[5] concluded that farm migrants have the lowest level of educational and occupational aspirations for their children. He also found that "better" educated farm people leave their present residences for a larger population center in search of a better job. This would suggest that the larger the population center, the "better" educated the people and the higher aspirations for their children.

Both rural youth and their parents underestimate the importance of education in achieving an occupation.[6] Youmans[7] has long felt there is a need to discover and identify the factors associated with the educational attainment of rural youth and to assess which of these can be influences to bring about higher educational achievement for them.

Wilkening[8] some years ago concluded that a majority of farmers felt a high school education was desirable for farm boys, but less than one-fifth felt a college education was necessary. Burchinal[9] found that one-third of the boys planning to farm, compared with over one-half of the boys planning nonfarm careers, indicated that their fathers thought the boys should continue their education after high school. About 14 percent of the boys planning to farm and 6 percent of the boys planning nonfarm jobs said that their fathers thought the boys should go to work immediately after high school. Over half of the boys who planned to farm and two-fifths of the other boys reported that their fathers never said much to them about educational plans. The boys' reports of their mothers' education views followed approximately the same pattern.

Apparently a small proportion of the farm parents made their occupational hopes known to their sons as Kaldor[10] found that only one-fourth of the farm boys believed their fathers had a job in mind for which they thought their sons should plan. About the same percentage held true for the mothers. Among the fathers who did have a career in mind for their sons, slightly less than half wanted their sons to farm. For the fathers who wanted their sons to farm, almost three-fourths of the sons were planning to farm, and for the fathers who wanted their sons to enter a nonfarm occupation, over three-fourths were planning

a nonfarm occupation. Of the mothers who had a career in mind for their sons, less than one-third wanted their sons to farm. In the majority of cases it was found that the parents who had an occupation in mind for their sons were similar to the plans the boys actually had in mind for themselves.[11]

When asked the greatest source of influence regarding occupational plans, 78 percent of the boys planning to farm reported that work-on-the-job was the most important. Sixty-seven percent thought parents were influential. Of the boys planning nonfarm occupations, 47 percent thought their parents were the most influential.

In summary, previous research studies concerning occupational aspirations agree that farm parents have not had the background of experience in nonfarm job selection, and as a result fewer than one-half of the parents are involved in, and have made fewer plans for, their children's occupations. A majority of farmers feel a high school education is necessary, but less than one-fifth feel a college education is necessary. As a result, they tend to underestimate the importance of college education in achieving a nonfarm occupation, and less than one-fifth feel a college education may be an asset. Even so, farm parents exercise a good deal of influence, as two-thirds of the farm boys who plan to farm, and one-half of the farm boys planning nonfarm occupations, indicate their parents are the most influential factor in choosing farming as an occupation.

Bauder[12] and Butchinal[13] also suggest that most parents who have left farms and small town communities have made the transition to an environment placing an emphasis on special training or education in preparing for occupations. As a result, they will place a higher value on education and be more likely to have definite occupational aspirations for their children.

Many research efforts have attempted to relate socio-demographic characteristics to young people's occupational and educational aspirations. In general, most studies have shown that residence (farm-nonfarm) is an important factor in a youth's vocational-educational decision. We have accepted this position and attempted to see if there are perceived differences in influence exerted by selected groups and individuals on the plans of these young men.

Further, we have attempted to see if any of the groups are perceived to exert substantially more influence on the plans of these outstate Iowa youth.

METHODS

A sample of Iowa high school districts was drawn from four selected area vocational school districts. These four districts (Iowa has 16 vocational-technical districts) were selected because each had an autonomous vocational technical school. Further these districts were selected because the larger project had an interest in measuring knowledge and plans relevant to vocational technical schools. Since we desired data from a non-metropolitan sample limits were placed on the size of community from which the sample was drawn. (None above 10,000)

All local school districts within each of the four area vocational school districts were rank ordered by size of the senior high school enrollment. Each school in each of the four area vocational districts was rank ordered into groups of three starting with the three largest schools in each district. This procedure was continued until all local school districts in all four area vocational districts were rank ordered. By random procedure one district was selected from each cluster of three high school districts for each area vocational district. This procedure produced seven local school districts for each area vocational district or a total of 28 possible local school districts. No provision was made for

replacement districts, and ultimately responses were obtained from senior males in all 28 local school districts.

Although districts were used as the sampling unit, individual young men responded to the questionnaire. All senior males present on the day of interview responded for a total of 830; hence, the data represent individual responses given in a group setting. The number of senior boys responding to the questionnaire ranged from twelve in the smallest school to approximately 100 senior males in the largest.

The overall design focused on short range plans relative to further education and/or occupation. Specifically, we were interested in what the student planned to do next fall (September). Since the data were collected in April, tangible steps already would have been taken if the respondent reasonably planned to enter college in the Fall. We have separated the sample into those who planned to attend college in the Fall (N=394) and those who did not (N=436). Those not planning to attend college planned to go to work (163), enter military service (115), attend some form of vocational technical school (111), and 47 were undecided. The statistics for this paper are based on whether the respondent planned to enter a formal college versus all others.

Statistics consist of student t tests between the college and non-college groups on the perceived influence exerted by the previously mentioned positions.

Specifically the students responded to the following request:

We would like to know how much influence each of the individuals or groups have had on your decision making in education and occupation plans. Mark

one of the following scores in each box. If you feel there was no influence or the box doesn't apply, mark 0. (Please mark all boxes)

4 very much influence

3 much influence

2 little influence

1 some influence

0 no influence

	Education Plans		Occupational or Job Plans
Parents		Parents	
Friends		Friends	
Counselors		Counselors	
Other Adults		Other Adults	

Means were computed for each group (college non-college bound) for each of the four possible sources of influence (parents, friends, counselors, and others). Mean values could range from 0-4 for each of the 4 groups for both educational and occupational plans. Hence, we have 8 t tests of differences between perceived influence on these plans.

RESULTS

Educational Plans

The educational plans of Iowa non-metropolitan youth are presented first. Data presented in Table 1 show the mean values for each of the groups perceived to have exerted some influence on the educational plans of these youth. The college bound group perceived more influence from all groups. It should be

recalled that the scale values could range from 0 to 4 for each of the four groups. The parents were perceived to have the largest amount of influence on both the college and non-college bound groups. The t test for difference between the perceived influence of the parents was significant at the 5 percent level. The mean value of 3.2 (college) was slightly above the response of "much influence" for the college bound the 2.5 (non-college) was between "little" and "much" influence for the non-college bound.

Friends were perceived to have had significantly more influence on the college bound than for the non-college bound, but the mean value was only 2.1 or just above "little" influence for the college bound. The mean of 1.7 was below the category "little" influence, for the non-college bound. Counselors were perceived to have had significantly more influence on the educational plans of the college bound ($\bar{X}$=2.3) than on the non-college group ($\bar{X}$=1.7). This difference was statistically significant at the 5 percent level. The last group, called "other adults," represents an attempt to ascertain the perceived influence of what Neil Gross has termed "role models." The mean value was 1.8, below the "little influence" category, for the college bound and even lower at 1.4 for the non-college bound. Hence, all category means for the college bound were higher than, and statistically significantly larger than for the non-college bound students in this sample. However, it should be noted that the means were not particularly high for any of the groups but the parents.

Table 1. Mean Values of Perceived Influence on Educational Plans of Iowa Non-Metropolitan Senior Males

	College			Non-College		Total	
	N	$\bar{X}$		N	$\bar{X}$	N	$\bar{X}$
Parents	394	3.18	*	436	2.52	830	2.83
Friends	394	2.06	*	436	1.71	830	1.88
Counselors	394	2.25	*	436	1.65	830	1.93
Other Adults	394	1.79	*	436	1.39	830	1.58

Table 2. Mean Values of Perceived Influence on Occupational Plans of Iowa Non-Metropolitan Senior Males

	College			Non-College		Total	
	N	$\bar{X}$		N	$\bar{X}$	N	$\bar{X}$
Parents	394	2.43		436	2.51	830	2.47
Friends	394	1.53		436	1.67	830	1.60
Counselors	394	1.58	*	436	1.36	830	1.47
Other Adults	394	1.48		436	1.40	830	1.44

* t test significant at the 05 level. See tables at the end paper.

Occupational Plans

The perceived importance of the same groups on the student occupational plans were measured in the same manner. The highest perceived influence on occupational plans was the mean of 2.5 for the parents of the non-college bound youth. This contrasts with the mean of 2.4 for the non-college bound parents. The difference was not statistically significant. The influence of friends in occupational plans was perceived to be relatively low for both groups. The mean was 1.7 for the friends of the non-college bound and 1.5 for the college bound youth. The difference was not statistically significant. The only statistically significant difference in occupational plans was found between the perceived importance of the counselors. The difference favored the perceived importance of counselors to the college bound. However, these means were both relatively low but the difference between the means (1.6 for the college bound and 1.4 for the non-college bound) was significant at the 5 percent level. The last group, "other adults," had quite similar means with a slightly higher but non-significant difference in favor of the college bound youth. This mean was 1.5 for the college-bound and 1.4 for the non-college bound. While two of the four means were higher for the non-college bound youth, these differences were not statistically significant. The only significant difference in the perception of importance of groups in occupational plans was in the perceived importance of counselors and in favor of the college bound youth. In general, the perceived importance of all groups was relatively low or between "some" and "little" influence on the scale used in this study.

Data written on the questionnaires by the respondents indicate that a number of the individuals perceived that no one had exerted any influence on their occupational and educational decisions other than themselves. The data do not permit us to conclude that the perceived higher influence from all sources for the college bound is the causal factor in college attendance by the youth responding to the questionnaire. Neither are we able to conclude that influence would have caused the non-college bound to attend a college program. However, it is possible that the perceived influence recognized by the senior males should have been examined in a directional mode. While we ascertained the degree of influence recognized it is possible that the influence could have been negative or against attending college. For example, some individuals responded in terms of their parents exerting much influence (3 or 4 on the scale) in their educational plans but that the influence was exerted in the negative direction or against further education at this time. Hence, it is a limitation of the data that we did not ascertain whether or not they were responding in terms of influence for or against their educational or occupational plans. In most instances, we believe that the response was in the positive direction or influence for education or for their occupation.

Data on the range of responses are presented in Tables at the end of the paper. Unexpected results indicate that 19 percent of the students perceived that the high school counselor had no influence on their educational plan. All schools had counselors available in the school system and the relatively high percentage does not indicate a lack of availability of counseling services.

The 22 percent responding that other adults (role models) had no influence on their educational plans was expected. By contrast only 7 percent of the youth responded that their parents exerted no influence on their educational decision.

The percentages for no influence on occupational plans are higher for all groups. However again the relatively high percentage for the counselors for educational plans was not anticipated. Twenty-eight percent of the responding youth indicated that the counselor had exerted no influence whatever on their occupational plans. This was topped only by the 29 percent responding that other adults or role models had exerted no influence on their decision.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary the perceived influence of selected individuals on the educational and occupational plans of senior youth was relatively low. In six of the eight statistical examinations the college bound youth perceived more influence (hence higher means) than the non-college bound youth. In general, the perceived influence was greater for the educational plans of all youth than for their occupational plans. While, the college bound youth perceived more influence on their plans than the non-college bound youth, only five of the eight comparisons were statistically significant. Hence, it is possible to conclude that influence on educational plans was perceived to be higher than that on the occupational plans.

On the other hand, almost 20 percent of these youth were in a transitional stage of their career. That is, they were going into military services immediately or were undecided about their plans less than six months away.

FOOTNOTES

[1] William Kuvlesky has assembled a series of bibliographies on educational and occupational aspirations of youth. The following are examples:

William P. Kuvlesky, et. al.,

1) "A Bibliography of Literature on Educational Orientations of Youth." Texas, A.E.S. Department Report 65-5, November, 1965.

2) "Occupational Aspirations and Expectations: A Bibliography of Research Literature." Texas, A.E.S. Department Report 66-1, June, 1966.

3) "A Bibliography on Status Aspirations and Expectations: Educational, Residence, Income and Family Orientations." Texas, A.E.S. Departmental Report 66-7, September, 1966.

4) "Occupational Status Orientations of Rural Youth: Structural Annotations and Evaluations of the Research Literature." Texas, A.E.S. Department Technical Report 66-3, September, 1966.

[2] The data presented in this paper were taken from a larger project funded by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Other reports are currently in various stages of publication.

[3] Neal Gross, presentation of research findings to H.E.W. Strategic Intelligence Unit on Education, Iowa State University, Ames, 1966.

[4] Lee G. Burchinal, "What's Your Son Going to Do?" Iowa Farm Science, 14 No. 9, pp. 16-18, 1960.

[5] Ward W. Bauder and Lee G. Burchinal, "Do Rural People Succeed in the City?" Iowa Farm Science, 14, No. 3, pp. 11-13, 1964.

[6]Irwin V. Sperry, "Educational and Vocational Goals of Rural Youth in North Carolina," North Carolina Experiment Station Bulletin, 163, 1964.

[7]Grout E. Youmans, "Factors in Educational Attainment," Rural Sociology 24, No. 1, pp. 21-28, 1959.

[8]Eugene A. Wilkening, "Acceptance of Improved Farm Practices in Three General Plain Counties," North Carolina Agriculture Experiment Station Technical Bulletin 98, 1952.

[9]Lee G. Burchinal, et. al., "Education Affects Farm Boy's Career Plans," Iowa Farm Science 17, No. 9, pp. 17-19, 1963.

[10]Donald R. Kalder, "What Careers for Farm Boys?" Iowa Farm Science 17, No. 2, pp. 13-15, 1962.

[11]A. O. Haller, "Planning to Farm: A Social Psychological Interpretation," Social Forces, 37, pp. 263-268, 1959.

[12]Bauder, op. cit.

[13]Buchinal, op. cit.

APPENDIX TABLES

Table 1. Mean perception of parents influence on educational plans by respondents planning to or planning not to attend college.[a,b]

	No.	Mean Influence of Parents
Plan to attend college	394	3.1751
Do not plan to attend college	436	2.5206

[a] t = 7.8761 is significant at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

[b] t = 1.962 is required for significance at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

Table 2. Mean perception of friends influence on educational plans by respondents planning to or planning not to attend college.[a,b]

	No.	Mean Influence of Friends
Plan to attend college	394	2.0584
Do not plan to attend college	436	1.7110

[a] t = 4.4142 is significant at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

[b] t = 1.962 is required for significance at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

Table 3. Mean perception of counselors influence on educational plans by respondents planning to or planning not to attend college.[a,b]

	No.	Mean Influence of Counselors
Plan to attend college	394	2.2513
Do not plan to attend college	436	1.6468

[a] t = 6.7617 is significant at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

[b] t = 1.962 is required for significance at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

Table 4. Mean perception of other adults influence on educational plans by respondents planning to or planning not to attend college.[a,b]

	No.	Mean Influence of Other Adults
Plan to attend college	394	1.7894
Do not plan to attend college	436	1.3945

[a] $t = 4.6845$ is significant at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

[b] $t = 1.962$ is required for significance at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

Table 5. Mean perception of parents influence on occupational plans by respondents planning to or planning not to attend college.[a,b]

	No.	Mean Influence of Parents
Plan to attend college	394	2.4289
Do not plan to attend college	436	2.5115

[a] $t = -0.9117$ is not significant at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

[b] $t = 1.962$ is required for significance at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

Table 6. Mean perception of friends influence on occupational plans by respondents planning to or planning not to attend college.[a,b]

	No.	Mean Influence of Friends
Plan to attend college	394	1.5305
Do not plan to attend college	436	1.6743

[a] $t = -1.8111$ is not significant at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

[b] $t = 1.962$ is required for significance at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

Table 7. Mean perception of counselors influence on occupational plans by respondents planning to or planning not to attend college.[a,b]

	No.	Mean Influence of Counselors
Plan to attend college	394	1.5761
Do not plan to attend college	436	1.3624

[a] t = 2.5171 is significant at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

[b] t = 1.962 is required for significance at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

Table 8. Mean perception of other adults' influence on occupational plans by respondents planning to or planning not to attend college.[a,b]

	No.	Mean Influence of Other Adults
Plan to attend college	394	1.4822
Do not plan to attend college	436	1.4037

[a] t = 0.9002 is not significant at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

[b] t = 1.962 is required for significance at 5 percent level with 828 degrees of freedom.

Education Plans -- Parents' Influence 06/11-13

	Total No.	%
Very much influence	318	38.2
Much influence	257	31.0
Little influence	110	13.3
Some influence	87	10.5
No influence and no data	58	7.0
Total and % of 830	830	100.0

Education Plans -- Friends' Influence 06/14-16

	Total No.	%
Very much influence	63	7.6
Much influence	200	24.1
Little influence	248	29.8
Some influence	209	25.2
No influence and no data	110	13.3
Total and % of 830	830	100.0

Education Plans -- Counselor's Influence 06/17-19

	Total No.	%
Very much influence	105	12.7
Much influence	231	27.8
Little influence	156	18.8
Some influence	180	21.7
No influence and no data	158	19.0
Total and % of 830	830	100.0

Education Plans -- Other Adults' Influence 06/20-22

	Total No.	%
Very much influence	64	7.7
Much influence	147	17.7
Little influence	181	21.8
Some influence	254	30.6
No influence and no data	184	22.2
Total and % of 830	830	100.0

Occupation Plans -- Parents' influence 06/23-25

	Total No.	%
Very much influence	227	27.3
Much influence	217	26.1
Little influence	194	23.4
Some influence	105	12.7
No influence and no data	87	10.5
Total and % of 830	830	100.0

Occupation Plans -- Friends' Influence 06/26-28

	Total No.	%
Very much influence	33	4.0
Much influence	165	19.9
Little influence	257	31.0
Some influence	192	23.1
No influence and no data	183	22.0
Total and % of 830	830	100.0

Occupational Plans -- Counselor's Influence 06/29-31

	Total No.	%
Very much influence	45	5.4
Much influence	145	17.5
Little influence	196	23.6
Some influence	208	25.1
No influence or no data	236	28.4
Total and % of 830	830	100.0

Occupational Plans -- Other Adult's Influence 06/32-34

	Total No.	%
Very much influence	58	7.0
Much influence	136	16.4
Little influence	163	19.6
Some influence	230	27.7
No influence and no data	243	29.3
Total and % of 830	830	100.0